

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6120
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 0770
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USCINCSO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 4576

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XA, CU, UR, MPOL, AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE REACTION TO SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA

REF: STATE 148740

SUMMARY: ARGENTINA IS VITALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE
SOVIET/CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA, AS PRESIDENT VIDELA
POINTED OUT TO PRESIDENT CARTER IN A RECENT LETTER
AND AMBASSADOR AJA ESPIL NOTED IN HIS MAY 19
DEMARCHE AT THE DEPARTMENT. COMMUNIST EXPANSION
IS PERCEIVED AS BOTH A STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL
THREAT: ARGENTINA SEES ITSELF AS A CO-DEFENDER OF THE SOUTHERN
ATLANTIC WHICH HAS FOUGHT A PAINFUL WAR TO OBLITERATE
LEFTIST SUBVERSION IN ITS OWN COUNTRY. ARGENTINA
WELCOMED THE STRONG US STAND ON SOVIET/CUBAN
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INTERVENTION IN AFRICA WHICH IT SEES AS FAVORABLE
SIGN THAT THE US IS "WAKING UP" TO THE DANGERS OF
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM. END SUMMARY.

1. ARGENTINA IS DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THE
SOVIET/CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA. IN HIS MAY 22
LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER (STATE 139837),

PRESIDENT VIDELA SIGNALLED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT "IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH THE COURSE OF EVENTS THAT ARE TAKING PLACE IN AFRICA... THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC, A PERMANENT ALLY OF WESTERN VALUES, IS AWARE OF THE RISK THAT THIS MAY POSE TO LATIN AMERICA. BECAUSE OF ITS GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION, THE STRENGTHENING OF AFRICA AS A LAUNCHING PLATFORM FOR NEW OFFENSIVES THREATENS A WAY OF LIFE THAT WE MUST PRESERVE." VIDELA WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THE GEOPOLITICAL SINGULARITY OF BOTH CONTINENTS, AFRICA AND AMERICA, MAKES IT IMPERATIVE TO JOIN EFFORTS AND COORDINATE ACTION TO AVOID THIS THREAT." HE OFFERED ARGENTINE ASSISTANCE TO "HELP FIND ADEQUATE SOLUTIONS."

2. CONCERN WITH THE SOVIET-CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA HAS BEEN APPARENT IN THE PRESS AND WITHIN GOVERNMENT CIRCLES FOR SOME TIME AND HAS LATELY TAKEN ON INCREASING IMPORTANCE. OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AND PRESS REPORTS DREW STRONGLY ON THIS THEME PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE NEWSOM TO ARGENTINA MAY 23-25, WHEN PUBLIC IRRITATION OVER CHILLED US-ARGENTINE RELATIONS DUE TO HUMAN RIGHTS ERUPTED IN STRONG CRITICISM OF THE US AND THE WEST FOR BEING BLIND TO THE DANGERS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND WEAK IN THE FACE OF SOVIET PENETRATION IN AFRICA.

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3. ARGENTINA PERCEIVES BOTH STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL THREATS FROM THE MARXIST INCURSION INTO AFRICA: AS A CO-DEFENDER OF THE SOUTHERN ATLANTIC, IT FEARS THE BUILD-UP IN COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN ANGOLA AND SOUTHERN AFRICA. AS A COUNTRY WHICH HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN A PAINFUL WAR AGAINST LEFTIST SUBVERSION, IT IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE SOVIET-CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY PRESENCE IN THE IMMENSE AND NEARBY CONTINENT OF AFRICA.

4. GOA BELIEVES THAT IT AND ITS SOUTHERN NEIGHBORS HAVE BEEN FIGHTING OFF THE MARXIST-COMMUNIST THREAT IN THE SOUTHERN CONE OF SOUTH AMERICA. IT BELIEVES IT HAS BEEN ENGAGED IN A WAR TO "DEFEND THE WEST"-- WESTERN VALUES, SYSTEMS AND FORMS OF GOVERNMENT-- WITHOUT HELP OR UNDERSTANDING FROM THE WEST--INDEED, GOA BELIEVES, IN THE FACE OF OPEN HOSTILITY AND SANCTIONS FROM MISGUIDED HUMAN RIGHTS ZEALOTS IN THE WEST. ARGENTINE OFFICIALS CLAIM INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISTS LAUNCHED AN ATTACK ON SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES IN THE LATE 1960S (SEE USDAO BUENOS AIRES

051209Z MAY 78.) AND HAVE ONLY TURNED THEIR ATTENTION NOW TO AFRICA BECAUSE OF THE SUCCESS OF SOUTHERN CONE GOVERNMENTS IN DEFEATING THEM HERE.

5. ARGENTINES IN GENERAL HAVE WELCOMED RECENT STRONG STATEMENTS FROM PRESIDENT CARTER AND US OFFICIALS WARNING THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS OF THE COST OF AFRICAN ADVENTURISM TO DETENTE. THE ARGENTINE PRESS, INFLUENTIAL PRIVATE CITIZENS-- ESPECIALLY THOSE IN TOUCH WITH AMBASSADOR-- AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED FAVOR OF STRONG AND CLEARLY DEFINED GUIDELINES FOR US FOREIGN POLICY IN THE AREA. EDITORIALISTS, RECOGNIZING WITHIN US PUBLIC OPINION FEAR OF
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ANOTHER VIETNAM, HAVE COMMENTED ABOUT THE NEED FOR PRESIDENT CARTER TO PERSUADE CONGRESS AND

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THE AMERICAN PUBLIC OF THE NEED FOR FIRM JOINT ACTION WITH AFRICAN NATIONS TO PRESERVE THE SECURITY OF THE AREA.

6. THE ARGENTINE PRESCRIPTION FOR HANDLING THE PROBLEM DOES NOT YET APPEAR TO GO MUCH BEYOND ENCOURAGING THE US TO SPEAK OUT STRONGLY AGAINST CUBAN INTERVENTION, TO HOLD UP REAPPROACHMENT WITH CUBA AS LONG AS CUBAN PRESENCE AND INTERVENTION IN AFRICA PERSISTS, AND TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT AFRICAN COUNTRIES CAN COUNT ON WESTERN ALLIES FOR HELP. PUBLIC ATTITUDES RECOMMEND US MATERIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT, BUT STOP SHORT OF DISCUSSING DIRECT US MILITARY AID OR TROOP SUPPORT IN AFRICAN NATIONS. THE ARGENTINE MILITARY GOVERNMENT RELUCTANTLY DEALS WITH THE USSR COM-
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MERCIALY--ARGENTINA ENJOYS A FAVORABLE BALANCE OF TRADE WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES--BUT IT STOPS SHORT OF BUYING MILITARY HARDWARE, DESPITE SOVIET PROMOTION. THE GOA HAS ALSO KEPT PRESSURE ON THE CUBAN DIPLOMATIC MISSION HERE AS A CLEAR SIGNAL THAT CUBAN SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM WOULD EARN IT SPEEDY REPRISALS.

7. THE ARGENTINE PRESS DID NOT REACT FAVORABLY TO A RECENT UPI REPORT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WHILE IN BRAZIL ASKED HIS HOST BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT GEISEL TO CONFRONT THE CUBANS OVER THEIR INTERVENTION IN AFRICA. WHILE ARGENTINA APPROVES OF THE STRONG US STAND REGARDING SOVIET-CUBAN EXPANSION IN AFRICA, IT MIGHT NOT APPRECIATE US PRESSURE ON ITS LATIN ALLIES TO CHOREOGRAPH A JOINT US-DIRECTED HEMISPHERIC FRONT ON THE CUBAN QUESTION. ARGENTINA, AN OBSERVER AT THE RECENT NAM PLANNING MEETING IN HAVANA, DID NOT, ALONG WITH OTHER MEMBER NATIONS, QUESTION THE ANOMALY OF CUBAN LEADERSHIP IN THE NON-ALIGNED WHILE IT SPEARHEADS AN OPEN DRIVE IN AFRICA.

8. IMPLICIT IN ARGENTINE PRAISE FOR A PERCEIVED "TURN-AROUND" IN US POLICY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA IS THE SCARCELY VEILED IMPLICATION THAT ARGENTINA HAS BEEN OR WILL BE "VINDICATED" IN ITS QUARREL WITH THE US OVER HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE COMMUNIST THREAT. PRESIDENT CARTER IS BEING PRAISED FOR "WAKING UP" TO THE DANGERS OF COMMUNISM AND FOR BELATEDLY LEARNING

THAT THE "US CANNOT FOLLOW A DOUBLE POLICY WITH
CUBA," A COUNTRY, ONE REPORTED NOTES, THAT "DOES
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NOT RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS AND HAS MADE A MOCKERY
OF EVERY ATTEMPT TO HOLD UP ARMS PROLIFERATION."
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